

Action

**THE BRIGHTON AND HOVE AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL GROUP NEWSLETTER**



January / February 2018

**Forthcoming
Brighton & Hove
Amnesty Group
Meetings/Events**

*Group meetings take place
on the first Thursday of
each month from 8-10pm
at Community Base,
Queens Road, Brighton*

1st February
Group meeting

Monthly Collection

17th February
17th March

Contact Madeline
01273 508620

madeline@peasgood.plus.com

**Monthly Stall
10th February**

Contact
celiastubbs@yahoo.co.uk

Write for Rights 2018

1st December
10am to 4pm
Friends Meeting House

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



IN AID OF

AND THOUSAND 4 1000

7:30PM (DOORS OPEN AT 7PM)
SATURDAY 17 FEB

ASYLUM MONOLOGUES

a professional play reading plus poetry,
music and readings

a first-hand account of the UK's asylum system in the words of
people who have experienced it, scripted by theatre company,
Ice&Fire

READINGS BY KATE DYSON, TREVOR JONES, ALEXA POVAH AND GLYN SWEET



WEST HILL HALL, COMPTON AVENUE, BN1 3PS

TICKETS £8 (CONCESSIONS £5)

TICKETS AVAILABLE FROM THE AMNESTY BOOKSHOP IN SYDNEY
STREET (BRIGHTONBOOKSHOP@AMNESTY.ORG.UK) OR 07790
755921 OR 07886 126968

Asylum Monologues

"*Asylum Monologues*" is a first-hand account of the UK's asylum system in the words of people who have experienced it. It was first scripted from verbatim accounts and launched in 2006 by *Ice and Fire*, a theatre company whose members are Actors for Human Rights. This performance is a rehearsed reading by professional actors:

Kate Dyson, Trevor Jones, Alexa Povah and Glyn Sweet.

"This waiting for the Home Office to decide – me, I always say that it is a diplomatic form of torture...my scars, they heal. It was painful but if I touch them now, I feel no pain. But the torture that is mental – this is constant..."

There will also be poetry and prose readings about war and migration, live music by Syrian refugees, refreshments and an opportunity to hear about the Brighton and Hove Amnesty International Group and *Thousand4£1000*, a local project supporting destitute migrants.

Tickets are available from the Amnesty bookshop in Sydney Street (brightonbookshop@amnesty.org) or contact 07790 755921 or 07886126968.

SAVE THE DATE! - National Conference & AGM 2018

7-8 April, Swansea University - Free to attend!

In these ever-changing political times, it is more important than ever for Amnesty to grow and strengthen as a movement. The national conference is a fantastic opportunity for members to come together to share knowledge and skills, hear from amazing speakers and feel energised ready to campaign effectively in the months ahead. The event is also an opportunity to get involved in debate and decision-making - a chance to engage in the democracy of Amnesty International UK and vote on the resolutions that will shape our work in the coming year.

Key dates:

1 November: booking opens

7 January: resolution submission deadline

1 March: booking closes



Further information on how to book will be available later in the year. In the meantime, do visit the [AGM website](#) to get a flavour of what goes on at the AGM, and to see the resolutions that were debated this year.

Democratic Republic of Congo – latest update – January 2018

Shots fired, altar boys arrested as DR Congo tries to halt anti-Kabila protests - Human Rights Watch says that on 31st December Congolese security forces shot dead at least two people amid protests in the country's capital against President Joseph Kabila's refusal to step down from power. Grass-roots Catholic activists called for peaceful protest in major cities to demand that President Joseph Kabila commit to not changing the constitution to stand for a third term and to releasing political prisoners. Troops fired shots and tear gas to break up gatherings at Catholic masses. Officers later detained 12 altar boys dressed in their liturgical robes outside one church as they led a protest march.

Congo orders cuts to internet and SMS to stifle protests - The Democratic Republic of Congo's government has ordered telecoms to cut internet and SMS access ahead of planned mass protests against President Joseph Kabila, whose administration has continuously delayed elections to replace him.

Sharp rise in refugee arrivals to Uganda as fresh violence flares - Fresh violence in the Ituri province forced over 2,650 refugees to cross over into neighbouring Uganda this week, five times the usual number of arrivals, according to the United Nations refugee agency. The new arrivals to Uganda, who are mostly women and children, are reportedly fleeing intercommunal violence in Djugu territory in Ituri province. There were reports of houses being scorched in the area, and people attacked with machetes and firearms. The majority of refugees cross Lake Albert in rickety fishing vessels.

UNHCR is stepping up its capacity inside Uganda to meet the refugees' needs but the agency's operation in Uganda is currently only 39 per cent funded, and more resources are urgently needed to upgrade the reception capacity and assist the new arrivals.

Hunger crisis, scarce funds could push Kasai to brink of catastrophe - An acute hunger emergency ravaging the DRC's strife-torn Greater Kasai region could transform into a long-term disaster if additional resources are not made available urgently, the United Nations food relief agency warned. The eruption of violence in what used to be a poor but peaceful region has claimed countless lives and forced nearly 1.4 million people from their homes. WFP has been working against the clock to help ever more people. Its efforts have helped a population that is growing rapidly by the day – from 42,000 people assisted in September to 115,000 in October and 225,000 in November.

However, money is quickly running and WFP plans to feed almost half a million people in December seem impossible as its resources are so depleted that only half-rations can be distributed.

Hunger not only puts lives at risk: it is forcing people into prostitution and increasing the risk of sexual violence, government partners to do all in their power to spare Kasai from the kind of decades-long humanitarian catastrophe that has plagued other DRC regions, mentioned by the UN.

Please take action:

Send an email to the UK Ambassador of the DRC : Her Excellency Ambassador Marie-Marguerite NDJEKA

info@ambardc-londres.gouv.cd or **missionrdclondres@gmail.com**

(Suggested text – please personalise it if possible)

Your Excellency

As a supporter of Amnesty International and a person interested in the safety and human rights of the Congolese people, I urge you to ask the authorities to:

- Promptly launch an effective and independent investigation into the killings and injuries that happened on and following 31 December*
- Bring all those responsible for human rights abuses to justice*
- Stop the ongoing pattern of repression against peaceful protesters and its associated impunity*

Yours respectfully and sincerely,

Mental Health and "Return to Work"

It's not just the introduction of Universal Credit which is affecting the Human Rights of too many citizens of the UK. As part of the drive to force physically disabled people into work under the "Work and Health Programme" often via cursory "interviews" those facing mental health issues are being targeted as well.



This is based [an article](#) by [Kitty S Jones](#) (<https://kittysjones.wordpress.com/author/kittysjones/>). In 2016 she wrote:

"Last April, [more than 400 psychologists, counsellors and academics signed an open letter](#) condemning the profoundly disturbing psychological implications of the government's austerity and welfare reform measures. The group of professionals said that over the past five years the types of issues causing clients distress had shifted dramatically and now include increasing inequality, outright poverty and that people needing support because of structural problems, such as benefits claimants, are being subjected to a "new, intimidatory kind of disciplinary regime".

*The signatories of the letter, published in *The Guardian*, express concern over chancellor George Osborne's plans, laid out in the latest budget, to embed psychological therapy in a coercive back-to-work agenda. Osborne said the government will aim to give online CBT to 40,000 recipients of Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, people on the Fit for Work programme, as well as putting therapists in more than 350 job centres.*

The letter stated that the government's proposed policy of linking social security benefits to the receipt of "state therapy" is utterly unacceptable. The measure, casually described as "get to work therapy," was discussed by George Osborne during his last budget (2015).

The letter's signatories, all of whom are experts in the field of mental health, have said such a measure is counter-productive, "anti-therapeutic," damaging and professionally unethical. The intimidatory disciplinary regime facing benefits claimants would be made even worse by further unacceptable proposals outlined [in the 2015 budget](#).

The proposals are widely held to be profoundly anti-therapeutic, potentially very damaging and professionally unethical. With such a narrow objective, the delivery will invariably be driven by an ideological agenda, politically motivated outcomes and meeting limited targets, rather than

being focused on the wellbeing of individuals who need support and who may be vulnerable.

A major concern that many of us have raised is regarding consent to participation, as, if benefit conditionality is attached to what ought to be a voluntary engagement, that undermines the fundamental principles of the right to physical and mental care. Such an approach would reduce psychologists to simply acting as agents of state control, enforcing compliance and conformity. That is not therapy: it's psychopolitics and policy-making founded on a blunt behaviourism, which is pro-status quo, imbued with Conservative values and prejudices. It's an approach that does nothing whatsoever to improve public life or meet people's needs."

The situation seems to be getting worse. Despite the recent Carillion fiasco over outsourcing public sector work other agencies have been given the contracts to deliver the Cognitive Behavioural Therapy component of the Return To Work programme. Of these, G4S ("[We are saving the taxpayer £120 million a year in benefit savings.](#)" Sean Williams – Welfare to Work, Managing Director, G4S.) have published the criteria for applicants as therapists to deliver **"return-to-work" advice in Surrey, Sussex and Kent.**

The Role Description:

Manage a caseload of Customers and provide return-to-work advice and guidance regarding health issues.

Targeted on the level, number and effectiveness of interventions in re-engaging Customers and Customer progression into work.

Focus on practical techniques that enable them to manage their conditions to enter and sustain employment.

Work with Customers on a one-to-one basis and in groups to provide support on a range of mental health conditions. Refer clients to relevant external health or specialist services as required

Conduct bio-psychosocial assessments via face-to-face and telephone-based interventions and produce tailored action plans to support Customers in line with contractual MSO.

Deliver specific health for employment workshops and input into delivery models to support achievement of MSO

Build relationships with key stakeholders including GP's, employers and relevant NHS bodies

Identify and build relationships with other organisations that contribute to the successful delivery of the programme.

Expected to contribute substantially to the development of the service. Including the routine collection, review and feedback of activity/data, ensuring that activity targets are adhered to.

Basic Requirements

Experience of delivering CBT.

Evidence of understanding of Welfare to Work and the issues that unemployed people face.

Should this delicate and sensitive work be entrusted to the likes of G4S? It behoves us as, Human Rights activists, to be aware of the grave potential for Human Rights abuses in our country and to act to monitor non governmental agents such as G4S who have already got a very poor track record in Human Rights matters.

Peter Gwilliam



Thank you to everyone who took part in our Write for Rights event in December 2017
Together we wrote
270 Cards
100 Appeal Letter
Plus lots of creative action



Refugee – Should I stay or should I go?

An unusual meeting which was held, ironically, in the Old Courthouse, since most of what we heard was about the dreadful legal system hanging over those claiming asylum.

The panel of speakers included: a gay man from Uganda, a Palestinian woman, a 15 year old Syrian Kurdish girl, a political activist from Cameroon, a Tutsi man from Eastern DRC.

The testimonies were shocking and heart-felt, exposing the terrifying ordeals which they had all faced: very young children fleeing from ISIS, persecution on the grounds of ethnicity and sexuality, expulsion by occupying forces and detention and torture for speaking out. On top of which several had then faced months of detention in this country.....for what crime?

A particularly tragic aspect were the poignant accounts of "lost years" in limbo in the asylum system, unable to work, have an education or make any kind of future provision: a man of forty feeling he had the life and experience of a man of thirty, never able to regain that decade of lost opportunities.

We all winced at the indignity of the 80p an hour "wage" for working in the kitchen of the immigration detention centre. And there was a real sense of incomprehension about the plain idiocy of locking up asylum seekers, at great cost to the taxpayer, when most would like nothing more than the opportunity to work, contribute to the country's economy and provide for their families.

The iniquity and horror of the "indefinite detention" was also discussed – the UK being the only country in Europe to impose such an inhumane sentence.

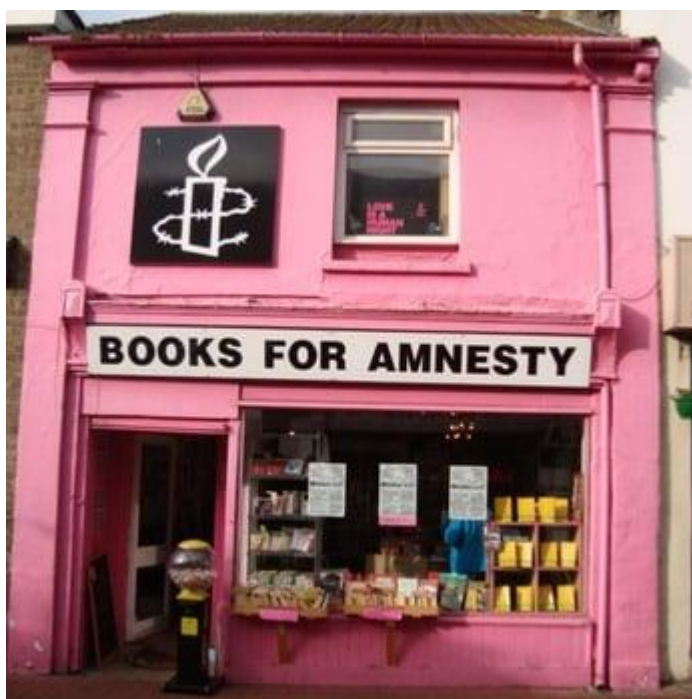
There was ONE bright light which was the experience of the young Syrian Kurdish girl, a remarkable, eloquent and confident young woman, who came here in 2016 under the Government resettlement scheme and found nothing but kindness and helpfulness: a ready-furnished house, a welcoming school and lots of community support.

Despite the inhumanity of "the system", all the speakers agreed that they had experienced a great warmth and welcome from "ordinary" people.

Sue Williams

BOOKSHOP

I am pleased to report that the Amnesy Bookshop in Sydney Street, Brighton has been refurbished and will be re-opening with a new look on Saturday 27th Januray from 10am.




Noticeboard


A line up of local musicians, Yamaya (Afrobeat Funk Fusion) and Alaa (Oud and vocals from Syria) will bring the music of their international origins to create a night that defies categorisation as either global or local.

West African chefs will cook a celebratory feast served on big platters for 4-6 people so that strangers can eat together to share the love.

Refugee Valentine celebrates love and celebrates diversity. It's our differences that brings us together. Refugee Valentine will take love beyond monogamous pairings to begin rebuilding a community that celebrates difference.



Refugee Valentine



ALAA
Magical Oud
Music from Syria

YAMAYA
West African
Funk Fusion

**An evening of shared
music and food celebrating
a love that crosses borders**

Rosehill Tavern, 14 Feb, 7-11pm, £15/£10/ono
(includes shared West African dinner)

BRIGHTON & HOVE AMNESTY GROUP CONTACTS

Chair – Peter brightonandhoveai@googlemail.com Tel: 01273 607110

New Member Secretary: Sue Tel: 07790 755921

brightonandhoveai@googlemail.com

Treasurer: Sue 07790 755921 susandcwilliams@gmail.com

Newsletter editor: - Emma: Tel: 01273 232397

Please email any contributions for the newsletter to

brightonandhoveai@googlemail.com

Lanes collection organiser: - Madeline—01273 508620

Individuals at Risk – Musasa Tshibanda —Sue 07790 755921

susandcwilliams@gmail.com

Guest speaker co ordinator—Caroline

West and Central Africa Region campaign – Peter

brightonandhoveai@googlemail.com Tel: 01273 607110

Children's Rights Campaign - Gwyneth Gwyneth.jones@ntlworld.com

DRC campaign - Sue 07790 755921

Amnesty Websites: international - www.amnesty.org AI UK -

www.amnesty.org.uk local group – www.amnesty.org.uk/brighton

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See our photos on Flickr— <http://www.flickr.com/groups/amnestybrighton/pool>

Amnesty UK Human Rights Centre - Tel: 0207 0331500.

